

The Meaning of Things: Kipling's Formative Journey "Home" in 1889 and the Late Victorian Imperial Tour

Abstract:

The 'seven years' hard' Rudyard Kipling spent as a journalist in north India are generally seen as the making of both his poetic and his politics. But as important as origin, community, identity and 'my father's house' are to Kipling, he should also be seen as a wayfarer of no fixed abode. In 1889 he used his first royalties to return to metropolitan fame by the long way round: Burma, the Straits, Japan, the Pacific and a transcontinental journey past landmarks of his Americanophile boyhood reading. Both distressing and exhilarating, it was a journey which stimulated the productive tension in him between the parochial and the universal. If an upcountry Punjab station had impressed him with the necessity of colonial rule, it was this voyage that engendered his all-embracing imperial vision. If he had honed his eye for 'local colour', this trip intimated to him that his metier would lie in culturally translating disparate portions of the empire to one another. Anticipating Baden-Powell's call to 'look wider', vagabonding proved to be an agreeable mode of existence, but metropolitan arrival was to hold its own unforeseen challenges and anxieties. At a time when English writers like Arthur Symonds aestheticised their sensation of cultural rootlessness in the figure of the vagabond, Kipling sought to foreground his own vagabondism with a persuasive claim to belonging.

One of the most candid admissions of Rudyard Kipling's early aims, offering a telling insight into the evolution of his imperial thinking, appears in a travel letter composed on departure from New York to London. The United States in the summer of 1889 had meant much to him: a literary pilgrimage from the California of Bret Harte to Longfellow's grave; a

disturbing encounter with modern capitalism; a fact-finding mission to a geopolitical rival at the conclusion of a long trans-imperial tour. His views were frequently acerbic and suspicious, but his parting tribute to Americans was to their 'passionate conviction'. From coast to coast the great majority of his interlocutors had a distinct notion of what their transcontinental Republic was and *meant*, and they were often willing to expound it with aggressive conceit. It was a brutal but compelling image of a diverse and unquantifiable land held together by a sometimes dogmatic ideology. Forgivable, Kipling decided, because of its propensity for something for which his childhood reading of Walt Whitman had prepared him: boastful and unabashed song.

The gusto with which he saw grizzled westerners launch into 'My country, 'tis of thee' led Kipling's prose immediately onto a definitive assertion: 'There must be born a poet who shall give the English *the* song of their own, own country—which is to say, of about half the world. Remains then only to compose the greatest song of all—The Saga of the Anglo-Saxon all round the earth.'¹ The word Saga was weighted with more than mere alliteration.

Alluding—perhaps unconsciously—to the grizzled *topos* of his uncle's friend William Morris, it served to dignify the oral, balladic, demotic verse which Kipling's literary patrons in London asserted would rejuvenate decadent English poetry. More ambitiously, Kipling's own implication seems to be that this imperial vernacular, by inculcating a unique international reading culture, would become a political phenomenon in its own right.

Kipling's Saga, moreover, is not intended to constitute the historical epic of empire after the fashion which Carlyle had once proposed, but rather a songbook anthologising the diverse tunes and rhythms of the empire. Exceeding mere domestic patriotism, he implies, it shall marry 'the terrible slow swing of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (which, if you know not, get chanted to you) with *Britannia Needs no Bulwarks*, the skirl of the *British Grenadiers*

with that perfect quickstep, *Marching through Georgia*, and at the end the wail of the *Dead March*.²

Kipling's self-advertisement had an immediate object. The five songs cited are all military anthems, and the *Barrack-Room Ballads* he would begin publishing six months later in London newspapers constituted his most sustained effort to establish institutional (usually soldierly) music within the civilian repertoire. More remarkably, however, the announcement outlines a clear-sighted précis of the next dozen years of his career, right down to his reproving Jubilee dirge 'Recessional'. He concluded with an audacious and, by this point, redundant flourish: 'Will any one take the contract?'

Writing just a few weeks before his return to London after seven years of journalism in India, Kipling was staking out his ambitions as a newly metropolitan author. The modern canon may have subsequently characterised Kipling as the hawkish and sardonic Bard of Empire, but his assumption of this role was integrally tied to the circumstances in which this declaration of intent was made. Firstly, it was written during the course of a round-the-world journey—perhaps the most significant of the many voyages recently anthologised by his biographer Andrew Lycett, and to which these remarks form a sort of coda.³ Partly solitary, partly in the company of his friends Alex and Edmonia Hill, he had taken in Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, the Pacific and the breadth of America on the long way round to England. Secondly, it was not so much a manifesto as a first draft, submitted for the approval of his erstwhile peers. Despite their world-encompassing object, Kipling's articles were actually intended for a specific coterie readership (''tis a consolation', he confesses, 'to feel that I am not writing to an English audience').⁴ This was one of the last articles he wrote under the letterhead of the *Pioneer*, that stiff-necked organ of upcountry Anglo-India, who received his serialised commentary by efficient imperial post and telegraphy. Collected under the title *From Sea to Sea*, they form Kipling's lengthiest travelogue. Thirdly, the empire of

song on which Kipling proposes to stake his reputation is to be held together by the deft counterpoint of Anglo-American melodies: the British Grenadiers quickstepping through Georgia. Antedating ‘The White Man’s Burden’ by nine years, the statement represents an early attempt to conceive empire as a collaborative English-speaking enterprise, underwritten by a common martial tradition. As I will show, Kipling’s attraction to certain aspects of American life is as informative as his utter revulsion from others. In the ensuing decade, he would marry an American and spend four years in rural Vermont. The discords that first confronted him on this visit, however, would ultimately drown out the Anglo-Saxon entente for which he entertained such early hopes.

The 1889 voyage has already been described as a reconnaissance of empire, and of new potential readerships.⁵ However, structurally *From Sea to Sea* is less a discovery of Asia and America than a collision of one against the other—an impact whose traumas would continue to haunt Kipling’s worldview. Neither was it a serendipitous event that shaped his career, but a planned and anticipated campaign (albeit one with many unforeseen reverses). The journey was also an unfolding progress during which imperial and American interests intermingled within broader concerns of cosmopolitanism, global capital and linguistic translation for which fictional works like *Kim*, more than a decade later, continue to seek resolution. A sequential, developmental survey of the narrative helps to chart the creeping-in of these themes, and forms this essay’s core—though for the sake of focus a fuller treatment of the Japanese phase is left to other studies.⁶ Returning to ‘The Saga of the Anglo-Saxon’, the final section will uncover the disjuncture between these emerging anxieties and the manifesto which sets a seal upon them, using one particular episode to suggest how Kipling’s own creative energies undermine his programmatic conclusion. I will aim throughout, moreover, to bring out the complexities of Kipling’s travelogue by comparison with its contemporaries, and begin by identifying a specific genre of fin de siècle travel.

The 1890s Cross-Imperial Travelogue

To the imperial historian, *From Sea to Sea* is chiefly valuable as a *colonial* perspective on the empire, published just as the “New” Imperialism of Chamberlain, Milner and Rhodes was gaining ideological credence. Plainly gesticulating at his *Pioneer* readers, Kipling stages his journey as the pseudo-naïve narrative of a country-bred mofussilite. He is the Indian abroad, but only half-facetiously, his sense of alienation and otherness exaggerated in order to stake an authentic claim upon the country of his birth. Preceded by one year in London by M.K. Gandhi, and followed one year later by the reformer and journalist B.M. Malabari, Kipling echoed his contemporaries by articulating an anti-metropolitan critique in the voice of the Indian imperial citizen.⁷ A copy of the latter’s *Indian Eye on English Life*, published in 1893, can be found on the shelves of Kipling’s study at Bateman’s in Sussex. Like Kipling’s fictionalised travelogue of a Muslim nobleman, ‘One View of the Question’, Malabari dwells at length on the bulked unwholesome food, insalubrious climate and poverty of London, and on the drunkenness (‘phenomenal bibulousness of the Briton’) to be seen in its streets.⁸

Kipling’s narrative, however, is more than the pilgrimage of a self-conscious provincial towards the metropolitan centre (not that Indian travellers should be seen as trapped within this centripetal pattern—the religious reformer Swami Vivekananda, as will be mentioned later, traced a trans-Pacific route similar to Kipling’s four years later). *From Sea to Sea* is also exemplary of a new genre of cross-imperial travel writing, in which the colonial bourgeoisie toured the empire laterally. Three months after Kipling passed through Vancouver on his eastward journey, Sara Jeannette Duncan arrived from Ontario by the newly-completed railway *en route* to Japan and India. Since the middle decades of the century the Canadian passage to London, Paris and (for Quebeckers) Rome had become so commonplace that loyalist narratives such as Sandford Fleming’s *England and Canada* (1884) were adjudged stale and wearisome by Toronto’s ‘exceptionally cosmopolitan’ *The*

Week.⁹ A critic of Canadian insularity in her ‘Saunterings’ for the same periodical, and known later for her novel *The Imperialist*, Duncan set out not only to circumnavigate the world but to approach the Empire by the back door. ‘Going round the world the wrong way,’ she notes in *A Social Departure*, ‘one gets one’s first impression of British consequence in it from a Sikh policeman of Hong Kong.’¹⁰ Discovering the familiar in a foreign guise, and thus establishing an imaginative link between disparate spheres of British influence, is a characteristic trope of this cross-imperial writing. Comparison—often competitively-minded—of roads, railways, architecture, sanitation and manners also contributes an insecure assertiveness to observations. This is amply illustrated in what Pesman, Walker and White identify as the new ‘imperial’ strain in Australian travelogues that emerged in the decade of Kipling’s ascendancy. In 1891, *The Age* commissioned Alfred Deakin to weigh the merits of Indian irrigation works against their Australian counterparts (as a noted theosophist, it is instead for its comparison of religions that Deakin’s writings from the Deccan have endured). The following year A.G. Stephens joined Vivekananda’s route to the World Columbian Exposition at Chicago, while in 1894 the tireless self-promoter ‘Chinese’ Morrison made his famous trek from the consulate at Chongqing to British Burma.¹¹

The new routes of private tourism and migration not only drew the interest of journalists, but were also ratified by official carriage. Queen Victoria’s offspring increasingly forsook European courts for a first-hand brush with their foreign dominions—Prince Albert Victor and the future George V descending Australian mineshafts and parleying with Fijian chiefs on the first ‘world tour’ from 1879 to 1882.¹² The latter’s much-fêted second voyage in 1902 was intended as a thanksgiving to the participants of the Boer War, its *de luxe* official history gilded with the Kiplingesque title *The Web of Empire*. As a performance, the tour answered explicitly to what its author termed ‘the new-born sentiment of Imperialism, the rise and rapid development of which are among the most remarkable facts of recent history’.¹³

Perhaps the most instructive counterpart to Kipling's journey, however, is provided by the semi-official, intelligence-gathering trips undertaken by 'forward' politicians like George Curzon. Though Kipling would not meet the future Viceroy until 1897, their earlier schemes of travel (in both cases financed, and publicised, by newspaper diarisation) were closely aligned in route and objective. Resolving on 'travel with a purpose' in 1887, like Duncan several years later Curzon crossed to Japan and China 'the wrong way' before methodically exploring most of North India, arriving in Rajasthan barely a month after Kipling had completed his first travel assignment there.¹⁴ Seven months later he was among the first British observers to travel the length of the new Transcaspian Railway, producing a blue-bookish, often pompous but carefully targeted narrative that—with his subsequent writings from Persia and the North-West Frontier—smoothed his passage into the inner sanctums of foreign policy. With the Czar's designs a constant topic of speculation in Anglo-India, *Russia in Central Asia* was given top billing by the *Pioneer*. Curzon was 'entitled to speak with authority after his recent travels', the paper noted in November 1889, while a lengthy review in December (appearing alongside one of the *From Sea to Sea* letters) assured its readers that this new 'Central Asian expert' should not be classed among the peripatetic M.P.s whose superficial opinions were a frequent butt of its in-house satirist (*Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, November 13, 1889 and December 18, 1889). If Kipling's Pagett and Lord Benira Trig descended fictionally from the Liberal accounts (such as G.O. Trevelyan's *Competition Wallah* or Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain*) that had hitherto shaped metropolitan views of India, then Curzon's celebrity represents a reclamation of the genre by the 1890s imperial hawk.¹⁵ Kipling's journey, which in places paralleled Dilke's influential tour, in turn contributes to this process of revision. He could hardly have been in sympathy with an author who described the Raj as 'a mere imperialism, where one man rules and the rest are slaves', nor with Dilke's follower J.R. Seeley who harped on the duty to educate

Indians.¹⁶ The whole doctrine of Imperial Federation was becoming less amenable to Liberals, meanwhile, bound up as it increasingly was with the call for tariff reform.

Kipling's vagabondage, only ostensibly footloose, was in many ways comparable to Curzon's self-appointed mission. Both men sought advancement in their respective political fields, their hands-on expertise entitling them to make sagacious prophecies and combative interventions. *From Sea to Sea* reveals Kipling building a platform from which to 'speak with authority'—or rather sing, since the role he obliquely awards himself at the end of the travelogue ('will any one take the contract?') is bardic. As a cross-imperial narrative like Duncan's, it confounds the once unquestioned relationship between 'centre' and 'periphery', and can help us toward the 'networked or webbed conception of imperial space' required by David Lambert and Alan Lester—in fact, I aim to show that Kipling already possesses something resembling this networked vision.¹⁷ But if *From Sea to Sea* can be used to define a distinctive school of turn-of-the-century travel writing, it is the departures from his contemporaries' methods that cast into relief Kipling's particular strategies for drawing the Empire into sympathy. Reading the letters as an unfolding narrative soon reveals that Kipling characteristically conceived this endeavour not according to Curzon's economic and political analysis, but in cultural and linguistic terms—with all the ambiguity and slippage which, we will see, that entails. Vis à vis his Canadian or Australian colleagues, moreover, it is important not only to appreciate the centrality of the United States (a destination foreshadowed and anticipated by the Asian narrative¹⁸) but also, firstly, that as he sets out eastward Kipling encounters not so much Greater Britain as Greater India.

Hooghly to Hong Kong: Greater India

As Kipling soon found, the eastern littoral of the Indian Ocean was bound by close mercantile and military ties to Calcutta and Madras. It was appropriate therefore that for the first time

Kipling shipped from the Raj's capital: by local routes into maritime Asia, not (as on his two previous departures from Bombay) toward Suez and Europe. He was expecting an eye-opener from the next seven months. Like Curzon, his purpose was to drink in information—and, more valuably, imagery—for his professional use, and from the moment of cutting his much-vaunted ties to 'the land', his ostensibly unattached drifting becomes a catalogue of impressions familiar as well as strange. 'Then I fell to admiring the bloom on the people's cheeks,' is his reaction to disembarking at Nagasaki, for example, 'the three-cornered smiles of the fat babes, and the surpassing "otherness" of everything round me.' His language with the Chinese was stronger and malign—their ingenious skill and devilish work-ethic appeared to him non-human, while (like Duncan) he drew a dubious aesthetic connection between 'the tortures' at the Canton execution grounds and the refined miniaturism of Chinese art (especially dubious since he viewed the city only from the vantage of a riverboat).¹⁹ In contrast, the Indian-style clubs and verandas to be seen at Singapore, in the European concession at Canton and at other imperial bridgeheads down the Malay coast elicited a nostalgic déjà vu, as did the Masonic Lodge at Penang.

The pattern develops early, as he rounds the Bay of Bengal. On examination, Kipling's notions of otherhood and brotherhood turn out to be quite specifically demarcated and justified, and the latter is founded on place, lineage and—most importantly—language. On the Rangoon steamer, he is gratified to find aboard a detachment of Punjabi constables drafted to police the recently-annexed tracts of Upper Burma. They pronounced 'the raw, rasping up-country speech amid the jabber of Burmese and Bengali.' 'Up-country' Anglo-Indians were, of course, the *Pioneer's* core readership and, with his adopted Punjabi wistfulness sharpened by a spell on the 'black water', Kipling returned to this theme with gusto at Penang:

I put my twelve-inch rule in my pocket to measure all the world by, and nearly wept with emotion when on landing at the jetty I fell against a Sikh—a beautiful bearded Sikh, with white leggings and a rifle. As is cold water in a thirsty land so is a face from the old country. My friend had come from Jandiala in the Umritsar district. Did I know Jandiala? Did I not? I began to tell all the news I could recollect.²⁰

As Duncan's encounter at Hong Kong demonstrates, the Sikh constable was of interest not only to Kipling. To her he stood for a Raj archetype, glimpsed previously in the illustrated press or perhaps, even, in the logging camps of British Columbia. Kipling, however, performs this scene as though he were himself such a migrant labourer *en route* from 'the old country' to Vancouver—paying a compliment, simultaneously, to his colonial readers who did not need to be told that a Sikh in white leggings must be a policeman.

This episode for the first time brings Kipling's own affiliations to the fore. As Thomas Pinney noted in his survey of the early journalism, there is always a 'peculiar self-consciousness' about Kipling's Punjabi attachments which, by inflecting his identity through various contexts, this journey makes even more acute.²¹ As the *Pioneer's* readers would have anticipated from his Indian travel-writing, he leaves Calcutta mouthing a mock-apology for having turned 'Globe-trotter' or tourist 'with a helmet and deck-shoes', and styling himself instead after the colonial 'loafer' or European vagrant—'a vagabond among collarless vagabonds', as he puts it later.²² He also takes the epigraph for his second dispatch from Tennyson's 'Ulysses' (a poem, incidentally, Curzon was similarly fond of citing), echoing a private letter which sums up his Indian years with a favourite misquotation: 'much have I seen, cities and men'.²³ This vagabonding, man-of-the-world posture almost seems to set up what follows after Singapore, however, as Kipling is overtaken by the vertiginous sense of being lost which is latent in that definitive Victorian wanderer. Half-jesting and half-despairing, he puns on the capital H—conventionally reserved for Britain—to declare his

mixed loyalties: ‘I want to go Home! I want to go back to India!’²⁴ In a low moment, he was evidently growing interested in dramatising his betwixt-and-between state.

Much of Kipling’s early work is animated by a conflict between the local and the universal, internalised within his relationship to the locales of his youth. Kipling belonged to two places in India: the remote station of Lahore, distant from the Presidency cities both literally and politically; and Bombay, the great trading entrepôt, cotton capital and—in the words of his father Lockwood—‘a very un-Indian, cockney sort of place.’²⁵ Calcutta he viewed, no doubt, in a similar light, and indeed the ‘disquisition upon the otherness of things’ advertised in the epigraph to the first *From Sea to Sea* letter turns out to be a discussion of the “foreign” customs of that Anglophile city, including a moribund habit of sober promenading. Kipling was later to celebrate the mixed, raffish quality of these thriving ports but for him the word cosmopolitan, as it would later be for E.M. Forster, was a derogation. It signified dilution and superficiality, if not degeneration—the globe-trotter was ‘extreme cosmopolitan.’²⁶

‘Cosmopolitan’ needs to be read within the Victorian frame of reference, freighted with the same kind of judgmental controversy attached in our time to ‘multicultural’. Its once keen political edge is now studiously deflected. Kwame Anthony Appiah has articulated it as a holistic ethical position, while in literary scholarship Rebecca Walkowitz has used the term ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ to describe modernist writers, such as Woolf and Joyce, who through stylistic dexterity evade, expose and frustrate prevailing social discourses.²⁷ In their own time, however, ‘cosmopolitan’ would have carried for these writers quite different discursive connotations, including a significant imperial dimension. Curzon, for example, deployed the word in a sardonic, double-edged fashion in Central Asia—xenophobic Russian officers are deficient in cosmopolitan virtues, but the Armenians and Jews who follow in their train epitomise worldliness at its most malleable and opportunistic.²⁸ The word’s disapproving argumentative bent was often turned against the late imperial hawks, who rarely

defended the label but instead slurred their opponents as ‘little Englanders.’ To G.K. Chesterton, this diminutive was a badge of honour. Those who wish to view the world on an epic scale should view it through a microscope rather than a telescope, he wrote in 1905, for the frenzied yen for mechanised travel was rapidly ‘making the world small’. Alluding to ‘Ulysses’, Chesterton describes Kipling’s guiding mentality as

... the frame of mind of the cosmopolitan man who has seen men and cities.... He is a perfect master of that light melancholy with which a man looks back on having been the citizen of many communities, of that light melancholy with which a man looks back on having been the lover of many women. He is the philanderer of the nations.²⁹

As Chesterton intimates, Kipling’s cosmopolitanism cuts across the ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ of Walkowitz’s authors. In contrast to their ‘persistent efforts to reimagine the centre in terms of peripheries’, he was stubbornly determined to displace metropolitan indolence with the spirit of the frontier. But if Kipling was indeed a serial interloper in the world’s communities, Chesterton fails to notice that it was equally vital to his aims to anchor his identity in one particular milieu. Notwithstanding their portability, Kipling made several self-conscious, performative efforts—in Vermont and South Africa, as well as India, before finally in Sussex—to put down roots. Moreover, though none were executed his sequential winter plans for a return to India seem to have occupied sustained musing on his part. In 1895, for example, he proposed ‘a set of twelve letters’ to the editor of what was then known as *The Cosmopolitan*, ‘describing the land from the point of view of the man to whom it means “home”’. Those would be more “cosmopolitan” than anything I could do on other subjects.’³⁰ He had already pursued the same theme for the benefit of his Anglo-Indian readership: while the 1889 journey served as an escape from provincial fixity and quotidian dullness, on his second world trip in 1891 he impulsively left ship at Colombo and travelled north, through ascending vistas of familiarity, to Lahore. Relieved to escape southern

passengers who smoked odd-shaped hookahs and spoke no Hindi, he wrote up the journey for his old employer in an article titled simply 'Home.' In a favourite motif, he describes the eloquent odour of Asia beckoning to the prodigal native-born:

a smell of damp earth, coconut oil, ginger, onions and mankind. It spoke with a strong voice, recalling many things; but the most curious revelation to one man was the sudden knowledge that under these skies lay home and the dearest places in all the world.³¹

At last, this was home with a small, unproblematised 'h', unhaunted by the Anglo-Indian mentality of exile. The native affiliation remained moreover, long after he left India, a bulwark against cultural rootlessness—a suspicion of which Kipling in fact shares with his detractors. For Chesterton, and later Forster, global travel was the pursuit of wealthy philistines obsessed with speed and ignorant of locality. Kipling possessed something closer to the modern historical view of imperial networks. In one early sketch he interviewed an Awadhi migrant who had made his fortune selling provisions to the miners of Kimberley. Speaking a compound of 'cheechee' English and Boer slang, the merchant tells him of his unsuccessful attempt to reintegrate in his native village: 'my people is all dead ... I belong to nowhere now.'³² Kipling's pen-portrait combines pathos with disquiet, as though the man were cursed—an approach he also adopted with the Jews he encountered in Lahore. He may, indeed, have compared himself to such figures at the conclusion of his journey, during his miserable stay in London, when J.M. Barrie dubbed him 'the man from nowhere.'³³ His cosmopolitanism then, if it can be called that, was barren when not complemented by nativism. The legitimacy of Alfred Milner's South African 'kindergarten' as a school of global policy, for example, was in Kipling's view underwritten by the birthright each member derived from his particular colonial community. As with the man from Kimberley, 'vernacular' language was the benchmark of authenticity, and pidgin the watershed of cultural dilution. At his first port-of-call in 1889, Rangoon, Kipling runs into a Punjabi

officer whose command of the vernacular used to mark him out as ‘one of Us’, but who in his new post bosses his ‘Madrassi’ attendants in truncated coolie-English. Horrified, Kipling tells him “‘you’re no better than a Bombaywallah.’”³⁴

This ultimately touches on whether Kipling viewed India in national terms. In his *Smith Administration* stories (1887-88), a Punjabi official’s fluent wit in managing a household of errant and bickering servants offers a glib masterclass in paternalism. This man’s condition instead seems to anticipate the nature of Indian government today, where secular cosmopolitanism and the English language comprise the de facto social covenant. His babu-fied condition suggests the defeat of charismatic governorship by bureaucratic homogeneity—leaving Kipling, perhaps, with the nagging suspicion that India’s best hope for social and administrative harmony lay with the Anglophone hybrids he so often reviled. This train of thought is subsequently given a jolt by the Cantonese at Hong Kong, whom he sees as clannish and anti-social—a kind of corporate race bent feverishly on wealth. Kipling is dismayed to discover that the European taipans and venture capitalists of South-East Asia have chosen to feed their booming labour market not with caste-restricted Indian manpower, but almost exclusively with cheap Chinese coolies. This was distinctly the Sinophobia of a “colonial”, born of the same anxieties as Henry Parkes’s contemporary policies in Australia—the metropolitan Curzon, by contrast, had regarded the Cantonese influx two years earlier as a sign of prosperous and enlightened British governance.³⁵

As though in mockery of this blow to his homeland’s struggling economy, Kipling then discovers that his freshly-polished shoes had been wrapped in a fragment of newspaper bearing the cautiously optimistic headline: ‘there is no Indian nation, though there exist the germs of an Indian nationality.’ Such comments would hardly have been unprecedented (in its articles on the Indian National Congress, the *Pioneer* habitually put ‘nationality’ in inverted commas). Nonetheless, the land that had gripped Kipling with its unrelenting reality

is made by this worldly editorial to appear as immaterial and contrived as vapour. 'I am sadly out of conceit of mine own other—not mother—country.'³⁶ If Kipling despaired for India's inchoate inefficiency, however, the passage also perhaps implies resentment that his measureless realm of language and custom should aspire to become anything so mean and functional as a nation-state. 'India a nation! What an apotheosis!' as Forster's Mr Fielding would exclaim two decades later. 'Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood... She, whose only peer was the Holy Roman Empire, she shall rank with Guatemala and Belgium perhaps!'³⁷

The staggering speculative wealth of Hong Kong may have seemed to cast the rural subcontinent into the darkness of intractable poverty, but his experience of Greater India had helped to bring India as an economic and administrative entity into focus. Indeed she was partly defined by her tentacular relations with the Indian ocean, for she had put Chettiar traders on the Irrawaddy and Sikh policemen in the Straits. This relationship also points to a sophistication in Kipling's understanding of British dominion as a world-system, a webbed vision for which he was interested in seeking historical precedent. To a degree these passages were sketching the preliminary outline of the Indian Ocean world now re-evoked by Amitav Ghosh and Abdulrazak Gurnah, the world that prevailed before mercantile reciprocity and miscegenation were abruptly curtailed by European naval dominance. Kipling, in spite of other lacunae, was quite aware of the history of the India trade, and also seems to have at least half-appreciated the reason for its demise. In 1897, he attached to a complete edition of his works a cunning preface describing himself as the Arab proprietor of a Malabar buggalow (cargo ship), importing Eastern wonders for the eager Western market, among them the curved Malay dagger known as a *kris*.³⁸ He had already noted wryly of a shopping trip in the Malacca Straits in 1889, however, that 'the *sarongs* come chiefly from Germany, the pipes from the pawn-shops, and there are no *kris*es except little toothpick things that could not

penetrate the hide of a Malay.’³⁹ Kipling understood that British fleets and trading concerns were engines of modernity, just as were the new constitution, new army and new uniformed railway conductors of Japan—lamentable developments, as far as he was concerned, in a country that otherwise surpassed the picturesque in an unbroken aesthetic communion with its own history. His imaginative goal, consequently, was to justify this economic hegemony and find ways of mitigating its deracinating effects—an effort of persuasion, and self-persuasion, that brought out his deep-seated ambivalence towards men of business. The Empire will be economically and politically secured by Chamberlainist tariff-protection, he suggests in one letter. Soon after he seems to conceive this ‘great iron band’ as a brake to commerce rather than as its facilitator, however, when he warns of a resurgent China armed with the ‘all the stimulants of the West’ by unpatriotic, buccaneering capitalists.⁴⁰

The challenge for India, upon entering the universal, lay in retaining her particular, local, cultural integrity. A striking solution Kipling generated from this journey was his conception of a historic Asian continuity underlying imperial suzerainty, binding the continent together culturally and hence justifying the economic network superimposed upon it. Exploring a temple in Japan, his eyes fell upon a wooden relief unmistakably depicting Krishna and Kali, which the bashful pidgin-speaking monk passed over with the comment ‘I think they are Indian gods, but I do not know why they are here’.⁴¹ The just-surviving fraternity of Asian religion was a theme which would return with grandeur in a poem composed upon his second visit to Japan in 1892, ‘Buddha at Kamakura’, in which the renowned monumental bronze is an antenna for pieties transmitted from distant corners of the continent.

And down the loaded air there comes
 The thunder of Thibetan drums
 And droned—“*om mane padme hum’s*”
 A world’s-width from Kamakura.⁴²

Kipling's was merely a borrowed antiquarianism. The folklorist and statistician W.W. Hunter ('dear delightful humbug', Kipling termed him in a *Pioneer* squib) had devoted part of his 1886 *The Indian Empire*, for example, to tracing the spread of Buddhism through the proliferation of common artistic tropes.⁴³ As a strategy in cultural politics, however, Kipling's vision exemplifies his prescient knack for anticipating the nationalist imagination. Vivekananda would comment on the same, or similar, carvings on his passage east in 1893, while Alex Tickell has noted that declarations of affinity with Meiji Japan became established in Indian nationalist discourse from the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Lambert and Lester warn their readers not 'to imagine the networks instantiated by Britons of various kinds as originary'. In his time, Kipling was quite aware of the pre-existing lines of communication upon which British structures rested, and sought to turn history to account.⁴⁵ His contention was that benign British dominion may serve to preserve Asian spiritual equivalence from its true nemesis: the bigoted missionaries and interventionist trade policies of the United States. The American phase of his voyage is not the continuation or sequel to the Asian, but is a sort of antithetical argument in which the anxieties that have begun to manifest themselves—cosmopolitanism, capitalism, nationhood, and the dilution of language—fully emerge and multiply.

Yokohama to the Chicago Stockyards: The Cosmopolitan Republic

The first piece of information Kipling offers his Indian readers is a cold-eyed assessment of American naval reach in the Pacific. 'When the *City of Peking* steamed through the Golden Gate I saw with great joy that the block-house which guarded the mouth of the "finest harbour in the world, Sir," could be silenced by two gunboats from Hong-Kong with safety, comfort and despatch'. The prejudicial allusion to American self-congratulation needs no explanation for his readers. As Max Friedman has discussed, the thin-skinned habit of

extorting praise from European visitors was a trait observed by Dickens, de Tocqueville, Trollope (mother and son) and Kipling's other literary predecessors on American soil.⁴⁶ Interestingly, he shares most in common with Dickens's 1843 account, echoing his critique of chaotic urbanisation, political partisanship fed by a 'licentious press', and addiction to 'smart' (i.e. unethical) business practices.⁴⁷ To this Kipling adds his mixture of hawkish military-industrial analysis, and the inferiority complex of a colonial clutching at the 'germs' of his nationality.

The latter leads him, as with his cross-imperial colleagues, into a defensive habit of comparison that had begun to stake out its premises in Hong Kong and Japan. His encounter with America had begun on the passage from Yokohama, in fact, among various irksome globe-trotting missionaries of the sort caricatured by Mark Twain in *The Innocents Abroad* (Curzon had compared their company to that 'of tortoises' when crossing the Pacific two years earlier).⁴⁸ Such men condescended to designate Indians as 'heathen', something which riled Kipling's discriminating sense of the integral complexities of South Asian society.⁴⁹ It was, perhaps, these cordial insults that first provoked him to weigh the merits of India and the United States. On occasion these exercises were complimentary. He found Washington D.C. 'Simla-ish' in his private correspondence, though only because it embodied in stone the executive control which otherwise he found alarmingly lacking in the seemingly lawless western states.⁵⁰ His more rhetorical travel letters prefer to contrast the established social order of rural Punjab with the chaotic rapine of Midwestern cities—especially Chicago, where his sense of readership is at its strongest. Here he 'had never seen so many white people together', who were in their manners coarser than a '*jat* after harvest' and in their dealings 'lower than *mahajans*' (rural moneylenders). The rustic analogy is then encapsulated in the idealised village of Isser Jang, where 'Jowala Singh, the *lohar*' and Hukm Chand the

letter-writer cannot match Chicago's production-line of metalwork and newsprint, but exceed the city in 'their understanding of the uses of life'.⁵¹

A.G. Stephens would adopt the same down-home grounds for colonial comparison three years later, when he described Chicago's 'wretched wooden shanties, which would be promptly condemned in any decent Australian town'.⁵² But Kipling's comparisons cut deeper: deeper into his American targets and, reflexively, into his own brittle ideological armour. Since the paternalist administration in Punjab sought to legislate against the mahajan's erosion of familial or caste land ownership, to equate his avarice with American free enterprise is particularly suggestive. Kipling echoes Dickens's lament for the vanished fortunes of Cairo, Illinois in his description of a Colorado ghost town ('more desolate than Amber or Chitor'). But as he is continuing to reclaim the Dilkean world tour for a Chamberlainite readership, his own disquiet at speculative capitalism is founded not on Dickens's Liberal and Christian values but on a conservative fixation with social precedent.⁵³ Similarly the *National Observer*, the arch-Tory paper which printed the *Barrack-Room Ballads*, would three years later decry the placators of London dockers but also the armed suppression of the Homestead Strike by Andrew Carnegie and 'the monster, Capital' (*National Observer*, July 23, 1892). As at Hong Kong, Kipling struggled to square his intricate imperial design with the haphazard economic forces which drove it.

Kipling's cultural dissonance in Chicago culminates at the 'death-factory' stockyards, where the slaughter of 'the Sacred Cow' calls forth spontaneously to his mind the horrified exclamation "'They are killing kine'". Accompanied by the same orgiastic violence which had overtaken his prose on the Canton execution grounds, the archaic wording evokes the disturbing alternative 'killing kin'.⁵⁴ It calls to mind the Native American exterminations of which—thanks to his father's indignation—Kipling held no illusions, as well as the wave of lynchings that shocked him during his first year in Vermont. Most importantly, it evokes the

Indian communal bloodshed that he knew could be unpent by the sudden transgression of such key mores as cow-slaughter.⁵⁵ The abattoir also points to an uncomfortable contradiction in Kipling between blood (spilled, mixed, miscegenated) which heals, and blood which diseases and divides. His choice of two Civil War lyrics for inclusion in ‘the Saga of the Anglo-Saxon’ implies his recognition of the Republic’s battle to overcome discord and to attain—like the enemies turned ‘brothers in blood’ in ‘The Ballad of East and West’—mature, plural and choric nationhood. Ten years later the Boer War would purportedly do the same, as Prince George’s *Web of Empire* tour celebrated, for the British dominions. Towards the end of his life, however, Kipling would opine that the Civil War, by killing off a generation of Anglos, had ensured the pollution of the racial stock by degenerate immigrants.⁵⁶

More so than American capitalism therefore, it was for Kipling the conflict of provincial authenticity with cosmopolitanism that held the most unsettling implications for the British Empire. Fresh from his Asian travels, Kipling understood the Republic in imperial terms—both as a congeries of states in need of unifying principles, and as a rival projecting itself into the British sphere. Something which contributed to his homesick mood when traversing the South China Sea was the appearance on the steamer of Americans, in particular one ‘American-German-Jew boy’ who wandered around the ship ‘bossing lotteries on the run’, and a wealthy child so inured to luxury travel that the new sights of East Asia held no mystery for him. Of this one Kipling was ‘afraid’, sketching him after the fashion of Hardy’s Little Father Time. His suspicion of these wayfarers as rootless, cultureless agents of cosmopolitan modernity was further piqued by their preponderance in Japan. As an imperial elite, they showed little promise. America’s pretence of an upper class was no more than a coterie, to Kipling’s proconsular mindset. Their private enterprise was jerry-building helter-skelter railways and purchasing votes with liquor, while—at least in the West—no proper

language was spoken but only ‘dialect, slang, provincialism [and] accent.’ This last rebuke is particularly striking, since Kipling as a boy had delighted in the mannerisms of ‘yankee’ verse by Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller. Now, on meeting it in the flesh, his Indian training kicked in. One of the happier experiences he chose to relate was sneaking up on some Parsis in the saloon of a Philadelphia hotel, and pouring the ‘sweetest of vernaculars’ into their amazed ears (the Parsis, like M.K. Gandhi, had been at the Paris Exposition).⁵⁷

Kipling’s description of American idiom as ‘provincial’ is characteristic of his scepticism. It is a word he made use of again when describing, in a less generous moment, his interlocutors’ unreflecting faith in the triumph of democracy. Such dismissals seem, at first, incongruous when placed alongside Kipling’s rapt digressions on the established rural order that pertains at Isser Jang, in favourable contrast to cutthroat and plutocratic Chicago. But like Stephens, who followed custom by titling his offering *A Queenslander’s Travel-Notes*, Kipling’s provinciality was self-conscious. As in *From Sea to Sea*’s Calcuttan preamble, the posture of upcountry ingénu is a defensive gesture, an arch refusal by the obtuse and evasive East to be ‘hustled’ by world-bestridding Americans.⁵⁸ Emerging simultaneously in the latter stages of Kipling’s trip, however, is his use of a platform of cosmopolitan superiority from which he could articulate and explain the wasted, spectral quality which had struck him in the Hong Kong steamer passengers, before dismissing their upstart pretensions. If they were creatures of globalisation, they were nonetheless not “men of the world”. Lacking that great Kiplingian virtue knowledge, they could not sympathise with the foreign or tolerate its challenge, because their relationship to their own country—or, rather, to their particular state—was that of the anxious parvenu. Two minor episodes in his itinerant conversation with America proved this to Kipling, for whom ephemeral misunderstandings and travellers’ gossip were always the most revealing evidence. First, he was brusquely informed that the poet who had long represented California to him, Bret Harte, was now disowned by his journalistic brethren

because he had resided for too long in England. More personally offensive, a fellow railway-passenger took it upon himself to advise Kipling that if he intended to make any money in the United States then it was his moral 'dooty' to naturalise.⁵⁹ Both the prejudice and the reproach would resurface a few years later when a quarrel with his American brother-in-law terminated Kipling's residence in Vermont.

References to Harte, Twain, Emerson and Joel Chandler Harris are a reminder that Kipling's rhetorical and (as with the apparition of a glamorous *femme fatale* at the stockyards) semi-fictional encounter with America was underpinned by his literary imagination of the country. It is this legacy, together with a taste of Methodist hospitality in sober, orderly New England that enabled the surprising transition from suspicion and revulsion to chanting *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. As a boy he had imbibed Whitman's celebration of America as the Columbiad nation destined to venture so far West that it would end by gazing upon the East, culturally bridging the world. The poet whose vagabonding persona Kipling so consciously emulated combined an authentic earthiness, expressed in twangy demotic, with the romantic visions of globalisation epitomised by his ode to that great conduit for imperial interconnection, the Suez Canal.

Passage to India!

Lo, soul! seest thou not God's purpose from the first?

The earth to be spann'd, connected by net-work,

The people to become brothers and sisters

The races, neighbours, to marry and be given in marriage,

The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,

The lands to be welded together.⁶⁰

Despite superficial coarseness, therefore, it was in large part not on his barrack and boiler-room repertoire but on America's Song of Itself, and on the Whitman he had lionised as a

boy, that Kipling based his ultimately flawed attempt to reconcile provincial Isser Jang with cosmopolitan Chicago—or, more pertinently, with ‘cockney’ Bombay. A choral ‘net-work[ed]’ poem like ‘The Song of the Cities’ inhabits the billowy, capacious atmosphere of Whitman, while the associated ‘To the City of Bombay’ (1894) is fleetingly touched with his free-verse lyricism.⁶¹ Kipling fulfilled Whitman’s call moreover for the poet of ‘captains, voyagers, explorers ... engineers ... [and] machinists’, and the 1889 journey ‘Home’ was essential to his assumption of that role. Embarking on the San Francisco steamer, he had pronounced to his friends a curse on Americans, for only they could have been responsible for the bootleg editions of *Plain Tales from the Hills*—the title itself suggesting, Trollope-fashion, provincial Indian life—he found on sale to the soldiers and missionaries at Yokohama.⁶² Setting aside vituperative letters and satiric verses in the periodical press, however, his ultimate revenge was to learn from the pirates’ audacious pursuit of a global reading market. America represented to Kipling a chaos working its way toward a resolution—or, more pessimistically, a ‘smash’—and his visit endowed him with confidence in his own aesthetic ability to hold the local and the universal in symbiosis, within the charmed space of his romances. Just as he purloined a stanza form of Emerson’s in 1894 in order to boast how ‘I shall save’ the American Spirit, furthermore, his by no means fruitless efforts to awaken in the United States a sense of its imperial destiny represents a subversion of Whitman’s register. ‘We got into colonialism as England smiled us into it, and as Kipling sang us into it’, the poet Edgar Lee Masters complained in 1937. ‘Kipling was a far more influential factor in our political course than ever Whitman was.’⁶³

W.J. Lohman has written of how Kipling’s worldview was shaped by regular phases of ‘culture shock’ experienced at five-year intervals during his peripatetic life.⁶⁴ This first long trip, however, contained multiple such shocks at varying intensity: a constant interplay of the strange and familiar, the provincial and the global, challenging him to evolve an artistic

resolution to their quarrel. The change in outlook was from that of a returning ‘colonial’, bound dependently to the metropole, into a cross-colonial agent traversing the *Web of Empire*. His understanding and advocacy of ‘the new-born sentiment of Imperialism’ would be also take form, as the phrase suggests, as an enterprise in cultivating sensibility or sympathy along its transverse lines of travel. As revealing as his call for a ‘Saga of the Anglo-Saxon’ is, however, it would be a mistake to view Kipling’s final reflections on embarking at New York as encapsulating his newfound imperial consciousness. It is a moment of cosmopolitan assurance—he even allows himself to boast, to his benighted countrymen, of his meeting with Mark Twain—premised on the command of language. Indeed, the friendships he forged with writers in the eastern United States certainly helped him to construct the persona of a world writer, speaking in discrete, localised registers of English in order to train his international listeners in the art of sympathetic translation.

This moment of confidence soon passed. Kipling’s stay in America from 1892 to 1895 would be marked by personal and intergovernmental miscommunication (the feud with his brother-in-law was piqued by the Venezuela Crisis, a dispute over the border of British Guyana). More immediately, his arrival in metropolitan London would prompt revulsion and alienation, propelling him into a subjective realm in which—according to his late autobiography—he built up his ‘vast, vague conspectus’ of the Empire and the ‘meaning of things’ within it during spells of profound reverie, mapping it out like a city suspended on a ‘sea—of dreams’.⁶⁵ This disarming, ethereal elucidation of his geopolitical thinking is of course retrospective, but it has its corollary in one of the earliest *From Sea to Sea* letters: the description of Rangoon rising like the dawn over the waters of its broad river. Episodes like this, where Kipling hovers knowingly between dream and delusion, take on a special piquancy when we reflect that his parents seem to have hoped the voyage would restore the mental balance which had more than once deserted him in India (feverishly productive in

these years, the young Kipling pursued concrete ‘things’ with the urgency of a man who genuinely feared hallucination). More pertinent to his empire of song, however, is that the instability of these images manifests in the transcendence (or exhaustion) of language.

Conclusion: Travel and the Limits of Language

The young Kipling’s frustrated attempts to establish demotic language as a knowable realm, subject to rational observation and research, and as a fit medium for his consolidated imperial sensibility, gives to his most lyrical descriptive passages an unstable, imagistic and ‘dream’-like quality. It is these highly-wrought literary effects that speak most eloquently of what was at stake, for Kipling, in a genre of cross-imperial travel-writing, and of the conflict and overstretch that attenuated what he termed not only a ‘vast’ but a ‘vague’ conspectus. David Spurr has commented on how Kipling—specifically in his Sinophobic maledictions—adopts, with self-conscious irony, the Romantic mode of describing things ‘through the medium of a fevered imagination’.⁶⁶ In these passages Kipling applies an ostensibly introspective mode rhetorically, dramatising his encounter with alterity in order to evacuate what was evidently, for him, an unnerving experience of linguistic powerlessness in the custody of a Cantonese cicerone with whom he was obliged to speak pidgin. More interesting, however, are those episodes in which he applies the same technique constructively, when his higher goals necessitate a subjective approach. The most telling is the arrival at Rangoon, where he induces, and then loses control over, a “feverish” vision of non-Indian Asia. Reflected in the waters of the Irrawaddy, the Shwedagon Pagoda beckoningly speaks to him, with no interpreter required.

...the golden dome said: “This is Burma, and it will be quite unlike any land you know about.” As it stood overlooking it seemed to explain all about Burma—why the boys had gone north and died, why the troopers bustled to and fro, and why the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla lay like black-backed gulls upon the water.⁶⁷

As with the various serendipitous meetings that would drive the plot of *Kim*, eleven years later, this encounter evinces a startled reaction not of strangeness, but of recognition.⁶⁸ The pagoda later featured in ‘Buddha at Kamakura’, and like the Japanese statue (also, significantly, a nexus of pilgrimage) it serves as a kind of Tower of Babel before the collapse. ‘Vague’, shimmering, and therefore numinous and ever-becoming, it was built to translate mortal prayers to heaven. Kipling adapts this function firstly to intermediate between the respective cultures of the Asian littoral but also—more audaciously—to elide the Hindu-Buddhist world with the British sphere of influence. For like subsequent, anti-colonial pan-Asianists Kipling exaggerates the catholicity of this symbol in order to make of it a vessel for his own, imperial epic—as represented by the sacrificial ‘boys’ who did not set out to conquer but, as if by providential design, were called.

While the Shwedagon may seem initially to belong in Mary Louise Pratt’s influential category of ‘contact zones’ in imperial travel-writing, its dreamlike prospect cannot be ‘estheticized’ within the descriptive conventions of Romantic landscape which Burton—in one of her examples—applies to Lake Tanganyika⁶⁹ or which Curzon lavishes on Bokhara. Rather it is possessed of its own eloquence, and like the scented coast which greeted Kipling from the Colombo steamer, ‘spoke’ to him ‘with a strong voice’. Such a volatile symbolic realm could easily slip, feverishly, from the hyper-real into the surreal. Dining in the Pegu Club that night, he learned by a typically throwaway remark of the death of an old schoolmate, Robert Dury, during the campaign upriver against the remnants of Thibaw Min’s Burmese kingdom. Dury’s muddy demise under a redoubt was an image so potent that, according to Kipling’s narrative, it provoked one of his extraordinarily vivid nightmares, remarkable for startling imagery in which the pagoda not only dwarfs its British observer, but ravelled him up into its all-embracing, indiscernible story:

All that night I dreamed of interminable staircases down which swept thousands of pretty girls, so brilliantly robed that my eyes ached at the sight. There was a great golden bell at the top of the stairs, and at the bottom, his face turned to the sky, lay poor old D---- dead at Minhla, and a host of unshaven ragamuffins in khaki were keeping guard over him.⁷⁰

That Kipling's symbol should prove too strong for him typifies the way in which his writing both manifests and, with equal skill, dissolves imperial panoramas. It may have been common, as S.H. Clark has discussed, for metropolitan observers to act out fantasies of the plenitude and totality of Western culture (and of its decadent dissolution) before an oriental backdrop. But for Kipling—moving laterally to the metropole—this was not only an especially self-conscious but also a decentred exercise, as he roved between arenas (like Kamakura) in which to imagine unity and those (like Canton or Chicago) that prefigured collapse. Furthermore, if we take our cue from Clark's application to imperial travel-writing of the arguments in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, then Kipling's assertive claim to a universal 'Anglo-Saxon' word-hoard can be found to stem from the reversal, at Rangoon, of his 'attempt to domesticate the alterity of the other'.⁷¹ According to Derrida's analysis, Western knowledge aspires to totality but is forever tormented by its own incompleteness. It bases its science on empirical experience of the past, but—since experience is always unfolding into the random contingencies of the future—it yearns for some transcendental spyglass with which to squint forward. The implication this holds for language is that slippery, ever-evolving words must be transcended by immutable symbols. Hence Descartes and Leibniz, as Derrida explains, propounded the notion that Chinese pictograms would furnish philosophy with the universal language in which to perfect itself. Kipling's own transcendent emblems illustrate the contradiction in these cosmopolitan thinkers, who wished for symbols to circulate like coins and yet to still derive all meaningful value from the singular and ancient culture which minted them. The Shwedagon is his own eloquent pictogram, but its meanings

are inscrutable and unstable. Offered at first as a token of imperial destiny, and endowed with a chaste eroticism, it transmutes the innocent ‘boys’ into dishevelled ‘ragamuffins’ who reproach their ventriloquist with silence. This paralysis of imagination occurs, moreover, after the stream of maidens leaves the gazer’s eyes aching—blindness representing for Kipling, as in his novel *The Light that Failed*, both madness and artistic impotence.

The problem of a travelogue—especially one ‘with a purpose’—is that it demands a destination, an evaluative conclusion. This nightmare forms, inevitably, the enigmatic ending to the Rangoon chapter, an ending that could not be further in tone from the comprehensive, assimilative scheme for linguistic affinity that actually caps off *From Sea to Sea*. Little trace remains of Kipling’s numinous moment of surrender in his afterthoughts on Burmese pagodas—least of all in the sexually-confident ‘Mandalay’ of 1890 (although ‘the silence ’ung so ’eavy you was ’arf afraid to speak’ sounds an odd note of speechlessness). It is one of those rare moments, recently discussed by David Sergeant, in which Kipling lets slip the more programmatic import of his work and allows the ungovernable creative impulses to which he sometimes alludes to take the reins.⁷² The limit to understanding that the episode points to in travel writing is, by extension, a limit to articulacy set for all his production. A token of this shortfall is given, a few lines after the appearance of the Shwedagon, in the aforementioned poem which finishes with an unanswered appeal for ‘the meaning of Kamakura?’ This inaugurates a rhetorical habit in Kipling of gesturing, cryptically and sometimes with capitals, toward ‘the Meaning of Things’.⁷³ The portentous meaning—or, as he titled the final chapter of his 1913 Nile travelogue, ‘riddle’—of empire can never be articulated, but only adumbrated. It is an unvoiced, incomplete sentence, originally spoken during a long voyage ‘Home’ which, like that of Ulysses in the Tennyson poem he spent his life misquoting, could never attain its destination. The novel which speaks most eloquently of his lifelong failure to arrive, and inability to go back, *Kim*, never loses control of the

symbolic panoramas it unfurls. But it does overflow with aphoristic ‘meanings’ of things ranging from horoscopes to walnuts—meanings that were either explained before the reader’s arrival, or which will be revealed after the story’s end. And in a late, self-reflexive joke in this paean to travel, its author indicates his own habitual means of deferral. ‘I will teach thee the art’, the Lama tells his disciple, ‘I will show thee the meaning of the Wheel’. But Kim, as yet unschooled in Buddhism, misapprehends him: ‘We take the road, then?’⁷⁴

¹ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, ii, 172.

² Ibid., ii, 172.

³ See Lycett, *Kipling Abroad*.

⁴ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, ii, 157.

⁵ See, for example, Hagioannu, *The Man Who Would Be Kipling*, ch.1.

⁶ For further information, see the introduction and commentaries in Hugh Cortazzi and George Webb (eds.), *Kipling’s Japan: Collected Writing*. London: Athlone Press, 1988.

⁷ I have compared Kipling to his Indian contemporaries at greater length in Bubb, Alexander. ‘Tracing the Legacy of an Experimental Generation: Three Iconic Indian Travellers in 1890s London’, in Susheila Nasta (ed.), *India in Britain: South Asian Networks and Connections, 1858-1950*. London: Palgrave, 2013.

⁸ Malabari, *The Indian Eye*, 49.

⁹ See Kröller, *Canadian Travellers in Europe*, 3, 6.

¹⁰ Duncan, *A Social Departure*, 182.

¹¹ Pesman, Walker and White (eds.), *Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing*, 37-43.

¹² Fabb, *Royal Tours*, 11-13.

¹³ Mackenzie Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 454. Kipling had known the author in India, when the latter was private secretary to the Viceroy Lord Dufferin. See Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 217.

¹⁴ Gilmour, *Curzon*, 65.

¹⁵ They appear, respectively, in the poem 'Pagett, M.P.' (1886) and the stories 'The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P.' (1890) and 'The Three Musketeers' (1887). On leaving school for his 'seven years' hard' at the Indian press, Kipling was awarded a copy of *The Competition Wallah* by his Whiggish headmaster Cormell Price. See Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, 108.

¹⁶ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, 186; see Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 178. Kipling also met Dilke's daughter-in-law, the suffragist Margaret Mary Cooke, shortly after the end of his journey and longed 'to kick her round the room forty times' (see Pinney, ed., *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 355).

¹⁷ Lambert and Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives*, 6-8.

¹⁸ These foreshadowings (or forebodings) include encounters with American travellers and American goods, and even a discussion of San Francisco's brothels with Hong Kong's 'Corinthian Kate'.

¹⁹ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 319, 306-7, 258, 311, 249. Duncan, *A Social Departure*, 188.

²⁰ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 214; i, 240.

²¹ Pinney (ed.), *Kipling's India*, 2.

²² Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, I, 208, ii, 48.

²³ Ibid., i, 217; see Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, 9; Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 286-8.

²⁴ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 260.

²⁵ Quoted in Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, 32.

²⁶ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 312. For Forster's use of the word see *Howards End*, 323.

²⁷ Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, xix; Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style*, 10.

²⁸ Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, 24.

²⁹ Chesterton, 'On Mr. Rudyard Kipling', 48.

³⁰ Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ii, 176.

³¹ Quoted in Lycett (ed.), *Kipling Abroad*, 65.

³² Kipling, *The Smith Administration*, 32.

³³ Barrie, *Two of Them*, 144.

³⁴ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, i, 207, 312, 227. As I discuss later in regard to American 'dialect', the vernacular-inflected creoles spoken by settler communities have a more conflicted position in Kipling's writing. They are a source of creative experimentation as well as occasional disapprobation.

³⁵ Ibid., i, 256. Gilmour, *Curzon*, 68.

³⁶ See, for example, *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, 18 Sept 1889; Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, i, 275-6.

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- ³⁷ Quoted in McClure, *Late Imperial Romance*, 22. McClure notes that even the anti-imperial Forster finds Indian attempts to articulate themselves in Enlightenment terms, through the mode of secular nationalism, hard to reconcile with his romantic and religious understanding of India.
- ³⁸ Kipling, *Two Forewords*, 28.
- ³⁹ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 244-5.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, i, 335, 360; i, 253, 294.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, i, 344.
- ⁴² Pinney (ed.), *Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 526.
- ⁴³ Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, 158, 202, 224; Pinney (ed.), *Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 1885.
- ⁴⁴ Vivekananda, *Lectures*, 394. Amongst other sources, Tickell refers to the dialogue between Lord Tara (a rehabilitated version of Kipling's Benira Trig) and a Japanese pilgrim at Puri in a scene from S.M. Mitra's 1909 novel *Hindupore*. See Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency*, 179, 243.
- ⁴⁵ Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives*, 12.
- ⁴⁶ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, i, 471-2; Friedman, *Rethinking anti-Americanism*, 37.
- ⁴⁷ Dickens, *American Notes*, 103-4, 267-8.
- ⁴⁸ Gilmour, *Curzon*, p.66.
- ⁴⁹ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, i, 262-3; For his most fulsome critique of bigoted American missionaries during this journey, see Kipling, *Abaft the Funnel*, 200.
- ⁵⁰ Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 337.
- ⁵¹ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, ii, 152, 157, 160.
- ⁵² Pesman, Walker and White, *Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing*, 43.
- ⁵³ Dickens, *American Notes*, 267; Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, ii, 143.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 165-6.
- ⁵⁵ Ankers, *The Pater*, 87. Kipling described lynching as 'pig-jobbing murder' in *Letters of Travel*, 99.
- ⁵⁶ Kipling, *Something of Myself*, 128. His voicing of this theory to an American journalist in 1922 precipitated a minor diplomatic furore (Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, 693).
- ⁵⁷ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, ii, 170; i, 478; ii, 338; Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 337-338.
- ⁵⁸ 'Here lies a fool who tried to hustle the East'—Kipling published this chapter heading in 1892, shortly after taking up residence in Vermont. See Kipling and Balestier, *The Naulahka*, 51.
- ⁵⁹ Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, ii, 152-7; i, 478; ii, 76.

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- ⁶⁰ Whitman, 'Passage to India', *The Complete Poems*, 429.
- ⁶¹ Kipling, *Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 326-28, 317-19.
- ⁶² Hill, 'The Young Kipling', 415.
- ⁶³ Kipling, 'An American', *Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 407; Masters, *Whitman*, 312.
- ⁶⁴ Lohman, *Culture Shocks*, 6.
- ⁶⁵ Kipling, *Something of Myself*, 91.
- ⁶⁶ Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 154.
- ⁶⁷ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, i, 219.
- ⁶⁸ When *Kim* stumbles into his father's erstwhile regiment, for example, and recognises a symbol (the regimental badge) taught to him in childhood.
- ⁶⁹ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 204.
- ⁷⁰ Kipling, *From Sea To Sea*, i, 229. For Dury's name I am indebted to Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, i, 117
- ⁷¹ Clark, *Travel Writing and Empire*, 67-69.
- ⁷² Sergeant, *Kipling's Art of Fiction*, 4, 177.
- ⁷³ Later uses of the phrase occur in *The Jungle Book*, 'Kitchener's School', *France at War*, 'The Woman in his Life', and (twice) in *Something of Myself*.
- ⁷⁴ Kipling, *Kim*, 307.

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